THE SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES IN THE COTTON INDUSTRY.

SUMMARY.

Labor disputes formerly bitter in Fall River, 450 —The mule-spinners' union, 451 —The strike of 1904 and the first sliding scale, 455 —Dissatisfaction of employees, 456 —The new sliding scale of 1907, 459 —Higher wages in 1907–08, 461 —Lower wages in 1908, 464 — Acceptance of reduction by the labor unions, 465 —Further slight revision in 1908, 468

BECAUSE Fall River is the largest center of the cotton industry in America, that city has long held an unenviable reputation for strikes and every other form of industrial unrest. Wage controversies affecting the entire industry have been adjusted here, and many times local manufacturers and operatives have been deprived of dividends and wages while the same classes in other communities in this respect more favored went quietly about their business, awaiting the issue. But at last both manufacturers and operatives have determined to change this situation, if possible, and at the end of the last general strike, which occurred in 1904, a plan for a sliding scale of wages was adopted. This plan has already resulted in better industrial relations between employer and employee, and both are hopeful that this agreement or some modification of it will furnish a basis for permanent industrial peace. Before describing the present wage system, a few words are necessary concerning the previous attitude of employer and employee in Fall River.

When in the first quarter of the last century a beginning was made in the manufacture of cotton goods, the factories were operated by native help. But, with the

growth of the industry, foreigners came to operate the spindles, and the first of these were English workers from Lancastershire. So long as employer and employee were of the same birth and in most respects social equals, industrial disturbances were rare. But with the coming of the English operatives a new element was introduced, for these men were agitators by tradition. Following the lead of those early trade unionists who fought so nobly for the cause of human freedom in the days when the factory system in Lancastershire had reduced the British work-people nearly to a condition of servitude, they introduced methods of agitation in a community where the same need for these methods did not exist. Of course there was a work for unionism to accomplish even in this community, for the growth of the factory system was already showing its tendency to minimize the personality of the worker, as it had actually annihilated his individuality in England. But the vigorous methods employed in the old world to effect his self-preservation were in America directed towards obtaining for labor what seemed, to the employers at least, a disproportionate share of the product of industry.

The first union formed in Fall River was that of the mule spinners in 1858. Because the members of this craft were all men whose wives and children were afterwards organized into other unions, the spinners obtained a position of great power,—a power which was immediately felt by the mill owners. With the rise of the spinners' union, the manufacturers met force with force and, no doubt, injustice with injustice. In those days the most powerful individual in the industrial community was the secretary of the spinners' union, and at his word a strike was declared or called off. This was possible, not only because of the influence which the spinners, as heads of families, were able to exert on the action of other unions,

but because it was quite impossible to operate any department of the factory when the mule spinners were on strike. Thus it frequently happened that a demand made by this union in the interest of its own members, and in the benefits of which the others did not share, threw the whole body of workers out of employment. The injustice of having a comparatively few workers thus dominate the labor situation gradually became apparent, not only to the manufacturers, but to the members of other crafts, who so often suffered on account of the selfishness of the stronger body.

The spinners became the highest paid of all the operatives, receiving, when the business was prosperous, more in weekly wages than we are accustomed to pay bookkeepers even in these later times; and all the operatives contributed to this result. While the spinners' was by far the most important union, the other organizations flourished, and all presented a solid front of resistance to the manufacturers. Following this development of unionism came a period of almost incessant strikes, the most important of which occurred in the year 1879. Altho the event happened in my boyhood, I remember vividly a parade of operatives which formed the spectacular feature of this strike. At the head of a great procession, a coal-hod for his helmet, rode the editor of the *Labor Standard*, a man of fiery temper in those days, but now the editor of a magazine which has done much to educate the worker to a better understanding of economic truths and the author of books which have made for a better social understanding between the classes.[1] That was a day of wild disorder in our busy city. Mill agents were hanged in effigy, their homes were stoned and their families forbidden to go into the streets, while the mayor read the riot act in front of the City Hall and bravely faced a

[1] The reader will recognize the description of Mr. George Gunton.

volley not of bullets, but of loaves of bread. That day marked, perhaps, the point of greatest separation between the employer and employee in Fall River. Yet even at this time the plan for a sliding scale was discussed by both mill owners and operatives. The consensus of opinion among the manufacturers was that the sliding scale would slide up without difficulty, but that it would never slide down. Reviewing the history of the labor situation in that community, I believe that the manufacturers were then right in their judgment, for at this period employers and employees were separated into hostile camps and the time was not ripe for the gospel of a common welfare.

Like all reformations, the change in temper on the part of both manufacturer and operative was a slow process. The dawn of a better day began with the downfall of the spinners' union. That organization came to the height of its power under the leadership of a somewhat remarkable man. You will find among the citizens of Fall River very many and very diverse opinions concerning the character of this labor leader, but on one point there is no room for dispute,—he had the ability to command the unquestioning obedience of his union. Under his leadership the spinners' union followed an aggressive policy which resulted in the bitter resentment of many workers and of all the manufacturers. It was the latter, however, who, in the end, found the means of overthrowing his power.

The spinning frame which could be operated by women was perfected to a point where it was possible to use the yarn produced in the place of mule-spun yarn, and, while the quality was not quite the same, it was sufficiently near the standard to enable manufacturers to throw out the mules, which they did at a great expense. The expense, however, they regarded as a small

price in return for the advantage accruing to them in the utter defeat of the spinners. The death of the leader before the defeat of his union was complete left the labor position in its militant aspect decidedly weakened.

There was no other union possessing the characteristics which gave the mule spinners their dominant position, and no other individual labor leader who for the time was able to cope with the situation. Hence there followed a cessation from industrial warfare. When I speak of the downfall of the spinners' union, I do not mean to imply that it ceased to exist, but merely that it lost rank as the most powerful of all the unions and became the least of the labor organizations. It should be explained, also, that the various crafts—the carders, the weavers, the slasher tenders, the spinners, the loom fixers—have each their separate unions, the secretaries of which now form the Textile Council, a body without legislative power, but which advises in matters affecting all the unions. Thus to-day no one union dominates the labor situation, as all have an equal representation in the Textile Council, with which the manufacturers now deal instead of with a single organization, and to which, for various reasons, the others have been subordinated. From the point of view of the individual worker, this fact marks a distinct advance in the methods of union organization.

Without following in detail the history of the relations of the manufacturers and operatives down to the time of the great strike in 1904, it may be said that from the fall of the spinners' union until to-day there has been a gradual growth of friendly personal relations between the labor leaders and the representatives of the manufacturers' association, brought about by frequent conferences to consider industrial conditions. These conferences, which have done so much to improve conditions in Fall River,

were first requested by the labor leaders, and for a long period were refused by the manufacturers. In the old days, when industrial warfare was so keen, it was felt by many manufacturers that to grant such conferences was to give the unions an undue recognition, and before the experiment was tried it was confidently predicted that no benefit could ever come to either party by this method. Yet the custom grew up, and the predictions of the pessimists were not fulfilled.

The great strike of 1904 was to resist a cut-down of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in wages, made imperative by market conditions. From the beginning the defeat of the unions was inevitable, and this fact was recognized by the labor leaders, who used their best endeavors to prevent the strike, and only consented to it when their opposition to the majority of the active unionists endangered their prestige with the body of workers. The fight was a long and bitter one, and ended in a compromise, which was in effect a victory for the manufacturers, except that it also adopted the plan for a sliding scale of wages. The strike was settled in a conference between the labor leaders and representatives of the manufacturers' association, at which Mr. Douglas, the Governor of the State, himself a large employer of labor, presided.

There was nothing new in the plan then adopted except that it was the first successful attempt, in this country, to apply the principle of the sliding scale to the cotton industry. The sliding scale of wages takes into consideration, first of all, the fact that prosperity or the lack of it, among manufacturers and operatives alike, depends in a large measure upon the market conditions which determine the prices of the raw material and the finished fabric,—conditions which neither employer nor employee can control. It admits the fact that there are times when market conditions make it imperative that wages

should be reduced and times when market conditions warrant an increase of wages; and it provides a plan by which such advance and decrease in wages may be made in an orderly and prearranged manner.

The sliding scale agreement went into effect in Fall River on October 21, 1905, and provided for an immediate increase in wages of 4 per cent., bringing the price of weaving to 18 cents per cut, which was established as a minimum wage. The sliding scale was to be based upon the margin between the market price of 8 pounds middling uplands cotton and 45 yards (which was fixed as a standard cut) of 28-inch 64 × 64 print cloth, and 33.11 yards of 38½-inch 64 × 64 prints,—the amounts of cloth which can be produced from this quantity of cotton. A premium of 1 per cent. was to be added to the wages for every cent the margin exceeded 72½ cents up to and including 85 cents. For every cent the margin should exceed 85 cents the premium was to be increased ½ of 1 per cent. The first period of this experiment extended from October, 1905, to June, 1906, and in the thirty-one weeks included in this period the average premium added to the wages was 3.84 per cent. This result proved unsatisfactory to the operatives, who then asked for a restoration of the wage scale in force previous to the strike. This was practically a demand for an advance of 10 per cent. over the minimum established by the conference. A demand was also made to abandon the sliding scale plan, which from the beginning had been unsatisfactory to the operatives; for the scale—then figured weekly—introduced an element of uncertainty in the rate of wages which the workers could not understand. How frequent and wide these fluctuations were is illustrated in Table I :

TABLE I.

Week ending			Margin.	Wage Premium (per Cent.) above 18 Cents per Cut.
1905.	October	27	.77	5
	November	3	.757	3
	"	10	.714	0
	"	17	.74	2
	"	24	.735	1
	December	1	.752	3
	"	8	.724	0
	"	15	.7502	3
	"	22	.7376	1
	"	29	.7537	3
1906.	January	5	.7641	4
	"	12	.7809	6
	"	19	.7523	3
	"	26	.7556	3
	February	2	.7949	7
	"	9	.8116	9
	"	16	.8145	9
	"	23	.8275	10
	March	3	.8285	10
	"	10	.8019	8
	"	17	.8127	9
	"	24	.7782	5
	"	31	.7542	3
	April	7	.76152	4
	"	14	.75016	3
	"	21	.74819	2
	"	28	.75552	3
	May	5	.7285	0
	"	12	.714	0
	"	19	.7068	0
	"	26	.7114	0

Average premium for 31 weeks . . . . 3.84 per cent.

It was difficult for the operatives to understand why they were paid 19.80 cents for each cut of cloth woven in the week ending March 3 and only 18 cents per cut in the week ending May 5, only two months afterwards. They did understand that the reduction was equal to a 10 per cent. cut-down, and that the margin, and conse-

quently their wages, remained unaltered at this figure for the next four weeks. They reasoned that, if it were possible to pay the higher wages in March, it was possible to pay these wages in May also, because it is customary to buy cotton in advance of immediate needs and to sell goods considerably in advance of their production; and they demanded that the higher rate be received regularly from week to week, and refused longer to submit to the sliding scale, which they declared to be unsatisfactory.

Now the reduction from 19.80 cents per cut to 18 cents was due to an increase in the New York quotation of middling uplands cotton from 11 to 12 cents per pound, and to a reduction in the quoted price of print cloth from 5 3-16 to $5\frac{1}{8}$ cents per yard. These figures were quite beyond the understanding of the mass of operatives. Those few who did understand the working of the scale contended that an advance in the price of cotton did not mean an increase in the cost of manufacturing unless the agents actually bought cotton at the higher price, and that a reduction in the price of cloth by 1-16 of a cent per yard did not mean smaller profits, unless goods were actually sold at the lower price. The mills had been stocked with cotton, so that it was unnecessary to buy at the higher quotation. A large part of the goods produced by the mills consisted of fabrics other than print cloth, the prices of which were in no way regulated by the price of prints; and, even if they were, the goods had been sold ahead at the higher price. In a word, the operatives contended that under the sliding scale their wages were arbitrarily changed from week to week to conform to market fluctuations that did not affect the profits of their employers and had no connection with their own wages. The cause of the failure of the first sliding scale agreement was the fact that by its terms

wages were adjusted weekly. During the first twenty-seven weeks, only three times were wages uniform in any two consecutive weeks, and the wages premium varied from 0 to 10 per cent. This fact kept the operatives in a constant state of uncertainty, which could lead to no other end than extreme dissatisfaction.

Another conference was held in which the manufacturers undertook to make the plan clear to the operatives, but the latter were determined to do away with the sliding scale, and, while conditions did not fully warrant the advance, the mills could be run at a profit under the wage scale demanded, and to prevent another strike, which their refusal would have certainly entailed, the manufacturers granted the demand. This action restored wages to the scale in force previous to the great strike, and took place in July, 1906. In November of the same year, when a period of prosperity greater than ever before known in the cotton industry was well under way, and the operatives began to see that, except for their short-sighted action in demanding a fixed increase, they would have been receiving, under the provisions of the sliding scale agreement, a largely increased wage, the demand was made for another 10 per cent. advance. This, too, was promptly granted. The period of prosperity continued. Again it appeared that, had the sliding scale been retained, wages would have advanced still higher, and in May, 1907, a demand was made for still another increase of 10 per cent. This demand the manufacturers stubbornly resisted, and for a time another strike seemed inevitable. Finally, an agreement was reached in conference, by which the increase was granted and at the same time a sliding scale for automatically regulating wages was again adopted. This agreement brought wages to the highest point ever known in Fall River,—an increase of 30 per cent. over the minimum

established when the great strike was settled. The new plan contained several modifications of the former scale. All of them were designed to make its operations less confusing to the mass of the workers.

The most important change in the new agreement was that the rate of wages should be revised but twice each year and should remain unchanged for a period of six months, being based upon the average margin for the previous six months. This feature removed the objection which caused the failure of the earlier agreement, under which wages were subject to weekly fluctuations. While for the whole period of six months the net results under the old and the new plan would be approximately the same, the new scale guaranteed a fixed rate from week to week, thus overcoming the uncertainty which had formerly prevailed among the help as to just the amount each might expect to find when he opened his pay envelope. This plan, moreover, made the relations between the fluctuations of the cotton market and the rate of wages clearer to the uninformed operatives, and by covering a period of six months answered their arguments in relation to buying cotton and selling goods in advance of the actual market.

Under the old scale an increase of 1 per cent. above 18 cents per cut had been given for every cent of the margin above 72½ cents until a margin of 85 cents was reached. Beyond this the increase had been ½ per cent. for each cent of the margin. The new scale provided arbitrary increases of rates for certain margins within specified limits; and these rates were somewhat larger than those provided for in the old list. The new scale, like the old one, provided for a minimum of 18 cents per cut and also for a maximum of 23.96 cents. The previous scale provided for no maximum. In both scales it was provided that the rate of wages in all departments

other than weaving should be adjusted on the same basis. While there is no standard price of wages fixed by agreement in the departments other than weaving, competition among the different mills has practically established a minimum upon which wages are adjusted in harmony with the sliding scale for weaving. The marginal limits arbitrarily fixed by the new scale were separated by five points, and Table II. illustrates the variation of wages within these limits, figured on the old and the new basis:

TABLE II.

Margin.	*New Wage Basis.*	*By Old Scale.*
115 points.	23.96 cents.	22.95 cents.
110 "	23.42 "	22.50 "
105 "	22.87 "	22.05 "
95 "	21.78 "	21.15 "
85 "	20.69 "	20.25 "
80 "	19.66 "	19.35 "
75 "	18.68 "	18.45 "
72½ "	18 "	18 "

This new scale went into effect under the maximum of 23.96 cents, which was the highest rate ever paid for weaving. In order to show clearly the relation of the sliding scale plan to the average wages during a period of years, Table III. is added, showing the fluctuations in wages in Fall River from 1884 to 1907, inclusive:—

TABLE III.

	Per Cut.
February 4, 1884	18.50
January 19, 1885	16.50
March 1, 1886	18.15
February 13, 1888	19.00
July 11, 1892	19.60
December 5, 1892	21.00
September 11, 1893	18.00
August 30, 1894	16.00
April 22, 1895	18.00

TABLE III.—*Continued.*

	Per Cut.
January 1, 1898	16.00
February 27, 1899	18.00
December 11, 1899	19.80
March 17, 1902	21.78
November 23, 1903	19.80
July 25, 1904	17.32
October 30, 1905	[1] 18.61
July 2, 1906	19.80
November 26, 1906	21.78
May 27, 1907	23.96

This scale, as I have said, went into effect in May, 1907. The agreement provided that wages were to be adjusted semi-annually. When in the following November the readjustment occurred, it was found that the average margin for the six months had been 16 points above the maximum, and consequently the maximum rate of 23.96 cents was fixed as the rate of wages to be paid until the following May. This ready settlement of the wage question pointed clearly to the advantages of an automatic agreement. A period of unparalleled prosperity was rapidly merging into one of trying uncertainty. The financial panic had commenced, and a wage controversy at this juncture would have been disastrous not only to the mills of Fall River, but to the cotton industry throughout the country. It was apparent to all, however, that the sliding scale now favored the operatives, as it fixed their wages for the following six months at the highest rate ever paid in the history of the industry and at a time when all indications pointed to a rapid decline of profits.

The events of the next six months, ending in May, 1908, illustrate best of all the chief benefit to be derived from a sliding scale of wages. The margin between the price of eight pounds of cotton and the selling price of

[1] Average under sliding scale.

the cloth that could be made from it, in the six months previous to November, 1907, when the adjustment took place, had averaged $1.31 and at that time stood at $1.303. From then it steadily fell until on January 28 it was only $0.899. By this time the operatives began to study the market quotations of cotton and cloth with the same eager interest as their employers; and never before in the history of the industry was there so strong a realization of the community of interests between mill owners and workers. The margin continued to fall, and yet the sullen preparations for resistance to an expected reduction of wages, which usually marked a sharply declining market, were entirely absent, but in its stead were heard, on all sides, earnest discussions concerning market conditions and their effect upon wages and profits. At the meetings of the labor unions the secretaries presented figures showing the highest, lowest, and average price of cotton during the period and traced the fluctuations of the margin.

By the 10th of April the margin had fallen to 61 cents or over ten points under the minimum. The mills for several weeks had been curtailing production, but, thanks to the sliding scale, which fixed the wages at the maximum, there was a noticeable absence of the suffering which usually attends such a curtailment.

When on May 25 the time again came for the semi-annual adjustment of wages, the margin had fallen as low as $0.52 or $0.22½ below the minimum; and it was found that for the period of six months the average had been $0.79, which called for a reduction in wages from 23.96 cents per cut to 19.66 per cut, amounting to a general reduction in wages of all the workers of 17.94 per cent.

Table IV. shows the gradual decrease of the margin during the six months we are considering:—

TABLE IV.

	Cotton.	28-inch. 46 x 64.	$38\frac{1}{2}$-inch. 64 x 64.	Margin.
1907.	*Cents.*	*Cents.*	*Cents.*	
November 29	11.39	$5\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{4}{5}$	1.250240
December 6	$11.85\frac{5}{6}$	$5\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{35}{48}$	1.181040
December 13	$12.06\frac{2}{3}$	$4\frac{53}{96}$	$5\frac{5}{8}$	.990104
December 20	$11.88\frac{1}{3}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{25}{48}$	.919557
December 27	11.74	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{1}{2}$	.927425
1908.				
January 3	11.64	$4\frac{7}{40}$	$5\frac{1}{2}$	.918700
January 10	$11.38\frac{1}{3}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{1}{4}$	.914720
[1] January 17	11.825	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{1}{4}$	.879390
January 24	$12.05\frac{5}{6}$	$4\frac{1}{6}$	$5\frac{19}{48}$	.866110
January 31	$11.75\frac{5}{6}$	$4\frac{1}{8}$	$5\frac{1}{2}$	.897980
February 7	$11.70\frac{5}{6}$	$4\frac{1}{8}$	$5\frac{19}{48}$	.884740
February 14	11.59	4	$5\frac{11}{40}$	.846100
February 21	$11.40\frac{5}{6}$	4	$5\frac{1}{4}$	.856470
February 28	11.42	$3\frac{7}{10}$	$5\frac{3}{20}$	.771480
March 6	$11.56\frac{2}{3}$	$3\frac{5}{8}$	$5\frac{1}{8}$	.738740
March 13	11.40	$3\frac{5}{8}$	$4\frac{43}{48}$	.714130
March 20	$10.98\frac{1}{3}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{17}{24}$	.688298
March 27	$10.46\frac{2}{3}$	$3\frac{5}{12}$	$4\frac{1}{2}$	.676392
April 3	10.45	$3\frac{1}{4}$	$4\frac{3}{8}$	.619531
April 10	$10.29\frac{1}{6}$	$3\frac{1}{4}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	.611505
April 17	10.025	$3\frac{1}{4}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	.632837

These figures operatives and manufacturers alike studied week by week, and never before was the need for a reduction of wages so thoroughly understood by the workers, nor the truth brought home to them so completely that manufacturers, operatives, and consumers are very intimately related. My own belief is that this reduction of over 17 per cent. was the crisis in the success of the sliding scale. The fact that the reduction was accepted without hesitation gives promise for the continued success of the experiment. In any event it effectively disposes of the old cry of the pessimists that the sliding scale will always slide up, but never down.

The spirit in which the reduction was accepted by the operatives is best told in the words of James Tansey,

[1] Example showing how the margin is figured:—

8 x 11.825 cents equals	.94600	1.91250	1.738275	.966500
45 x $4\frac{1}{4}$ " "	1.91250	.94600	.946000	.792275
33.11 x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " "	1.738275	.96650	.792275	2)1.758775
				.8793875

the president of the Textile Council and secretary of the Carders' Association, in his report to the several unions. The following extract is somewhat long, but deserves careful attention as illustrating the growth of the idea in one industrial community, at least, that employer and employee have a common interest:—

We, the members of the Textile Council, regret that such conditions have arisen which should call for the reduction in wages as stated in the agreement; and while we realize that the reduction is a steep one, we hope and feel that you will not lose sight of the fact that it is being taken from the highest rate of wages that has ever prevailed during the life of the Textile Council and for many years previous to its existence. It is safe to say that we can go back at least thirty-five years and then only under the most exceptional conditions can a comparison be made.

It should not be necessary to remind you that the rate of wages paid during the last twelve months is 10 per cent. higher than ever was paid in the city during our life as combined unions, and further that it is 20 per cent. higher, with an exception of a period of about nine months a few years ago.

With regard to the present agreement, we do not nor have we ever taken and declared that it is the panacea for all difficulties existing between the employer and employee in our trade, but we do declare emphatically and without reserve that it is and has proven to be the best agreement for the operatives that was ever accepted by the employers for the control and regulation of the rise and fall in wages, and further assert, for reasons stated above, that it is well worthy of a trial of experience and as a guide in dealing with such questions in the future.

Until such time that we see that a change is necessary in the margin scale, we say to our members that this agreement should be honorably lived up to, as it was entered into honorably by vote of acceptance and endorsed by all of the unions at their general meetings before being signed by the representatives of the respective associations contracted.

Even though the reduction in wages is greater under the agreement than was anticipated by its most ardent supporters, and which we regret, we are not prepared to declare that it is a failure, because, owing to the unfortunate trade conditions previously re-

ferred to which suddenly and unexpectedly worked havoc with our industry, we do not believe it has had a fair trial; and until such time that it has, the least that can be expected is that judgment should be suspended and hasty action upon our part be rejected.

The only comparison that we can draw to compare with present conditions is that which existed in 1898, ten years ago, when the market got down about 50 cents, and we were obliged to accept reductions in wages which brought the weaver down to 16 cents per cut and all other departments in proportion. The margin to-day is but 57.61 cents and it has been between the fifties and sixties for nearly two months, and the price per cut under the reduced rate is 19.66 cents per cut, with operatives in all other departments in proportion, a matter of about 20 per cent., a higher rate than prevailed under similar conditions in 1898, to say nothing of other improved conditions.

Again repeating our regret for the reduction of wages that goes into effect Monday morning, brought about through conditions over which neither employer nor employee has control, we bring these matters to your attention, so that you can deliberate on the conditions and situation with more intelligence and give to it that fair, just and conservative consideration that all such important subjects of its kind are entitled.

The sliding scale plan now (1909) stands just as it has been described, except for some minor changes occasioned by an event which occurred two months after this readjustment. The sharp reduction in wages gave rise quite naturally to a deep disappointment to many operatives, and at a meeting of the Mule Spinners' Association, attended by only one-seventh of the total membership of 350, a resolution was passed by a majority of three that this association should give the required three months' notice to withdraw from the agreement. The agreement, it will be remembered, is between the Textile Council, composed of representatives of all the unions, and the manufacturers, and of course could not be terminated except by an adverse vote of a majority of the unions.

The action of the spinners, however, called attention to the dissatisfaction of some of the workers, and meetings of the other unions were called. The carders voted in favor of continuing the agreement, the loom fixers voted for the continuance, but recommended that the agreement be revised, while the weavers referred the matter to the Textile Council with the request that an effort be made to revise the plan in any way which might make it more satisfactory. Thus the action of the spinners brought about a general discussion, the tenor of which was that this union had been in error when it brought the charge that the "sliding scale agreement had proved a failure so far as the workers are concerned." It was shown that throughout the year during which this agreement had been in force the maximum wage had been paid, altho during the second half of the year the manufacturers' profits had disappeared, and in most instances had been changed to a loss. The reduction of nearly 18 per cent., while very heavy, was from the highest rate paid in Fall River in the past thirty-six years, and left a wage nearly 10 per cent. above the minimum under the agreement, and 23 per cent. above the lowest wages on record which prevailed in 1904 and 1908: a cut of nearly the same amount had been previously made when the regulation was a matter of the will of the stronger side; and, most important consideration of all, wages had two months previously been fixed for six months on a basis of 19.66 cents per cut, at a time when the actual margin was equivalent to a wage basis of only 16 cents,—a rate which had been twice paid when market conditions were no worse. Fortunately, the better judgment of the majority prevailed, and the spinners withdrew their objection after a conference had been held to revise the plan, as suggested by the loom fixers and weavers.

This revision consisted in fixing the points at which

wages were to be changed at $2\frac{1}{2}$ instead of 5 points, and is illustrated in Table V.:—

TABLE V.

With a Margin of		With a Margin of	
115 points	23.96	95 points	21.23
$112\frac{1}{2}$ "	23.69	$87\frac{1}{2}$ "	20.96
110 "	23.42	85 "	20.69
$107\frac{1}{2}$ "	23.14	$82\frac{1}{2}$ "	20.18
105 "	22.87	80 "	19.66
$102\frac{1}{2}$ "	22.59	$77\frac{1}{2}$ "	19.17
100 "	22.32	75 "	18.68
$97\frac{1}{2}$ "	22.05	$72\frac{1}{2}$ "	18.00

The maximum and the minimum here remain the same: the only difference is in increasing the number of points at which revision takes place. It is provided that there shall be no change in the price on either the ascending or descending scale unless the margin shall have reached a point in the above schedule. Reductions and advances are not to take place until two weeks after the end of the period upon which wages are based for the next six months. When in November, 1908, the time came to fix the rate of wages to be paid for the six months ending in May, 1909, it was found that the margin called for a reduction of 8 per cent. The manufacturers, however, voluntarily waived their right to demand the reduction; and wages were continued at the rate then in force. This action of the employers came as a pleasant surprise to the operatives, and has done much to further that better unstanding between capital and labor which, in the cotton industry, is steadily increasing.

This, then, is the present situation of the wage question in Fall River. The plan for a sliding scale of wages, first tried and found wanting, but afterwards perfected, is still in force and meeting with the approval of both parties to the agreement. It has stood the test of a

period in which the maximum of wages was paid when all profits in the business had disappeared, and under its operation the workers have accepted one of the largest reductions of wages known in the history of the industry. The plan has brought vividly to the attention of both the manufacturers and the operatives a realization of their common interests, and has revived, in a measure, that sense of partnership between the man who buys labor and the man who sells it which once existed in the earlier stages of our industrial development.

JONATHAN THAYER LINCOLN.

FALL RIVER, MASS.